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EPISTLE

To the several Congregations of the

NON-CONFORMISTS.

By Cap. ROBERT EVERARD.

Now by Gods Grace a Member of the Holy Catholick Church of

CHRIST.

Shewing the Reasons of his Conversion and Submission to the said

CATHOLICK CHURCH.

PARIS Printed 1664.

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If there be any who hath any Value for the Authority of the great St. *Austin*, I shall beseech them to read this following Text of that Saint, and to consider whether I have not in my proceedings observed his Rule and Method. And let them but change the Word *Manichæus* into *John Calvin*, and observe how neerly it will concern them.

St. Aug. against the *Epist.* of *Manichæus* which they call Fundamental *c.* 5. *Edit. Paris Tom.* 6. 1. 46.

IF thou shalt find any one who doth not as yet beleive the Gospel, what wilt thou do when he shall say unto thee I do not beleive? But neither had I beleived the Gospel unless I had been thereunto moved by the Authority of the Catholick Church: Those therefore to whom I submitted, when they required me to beleive the Gospel, why should I not also yield Obedience unto them when they direct me not to beleive Manichæus *? Take your choice; If you tell me I must beleive the Catholicks, they give me Advice not to give Credit to you, and therefore if I beleive them I cannot but refuse to beleive you. If you tell me I must not beleive the Catholicks; you proceed ill, when you go about by the Gospel to perswade me to beleive* Manichæus, *because it was from the Preachings of the Catholicks*

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that I beleived the Gospel it self. If you tell me I did well when I beleived the Catholicks prayſing the Goſpel, but I do ill when I beleive the ſame perſons decrying Manichæus, do you take me to be ſo ſtupid as without any Reaſon given unto me I ſhould beleive or disbeleive what you pleaſe? &c. But if you have any Reaſon to offer unto me, lay aſide the Goſpel; if you hold your ſelf to the Goſpel I ſhall adhere to thoſe upon whoſe commands I beleived the Goſpel, and ſo long as I Obey them I ſhall not beleive you. But if by Accident you ſhould find any thing in the Goſpel moſt evidently touching the Apoſtleſhip of Manichæus, you will weaken the Authority of the Catholicks in my eſteem who require me not to beleive you, but that being weakned I ſhall not beleive the Goſpel, becauſe I beleive that by them; ſo that whatſoever you bring from the Goſpel will be of no force with me. Wherefore if nothing be found in the Goſpel for the manifeſtation of Manichæus his Apoſtleſhip, I ſhall rather give credit to the Catholicks then you. But if any thing ſhall be there found manifeſt on the behalf of Manichæus, I ſhall neither beleive them nor you: Not them, becauſe they told me a Lye of you; nor ſhall I beleive you, becauſe you urge that Scripture to me which I beleived upon their Authority who told me a Lye in relation to you.

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I cannot doubt but the Reports, which have lately ſpread concerning me, and of my change and Alteration in the great Affair of Religion, put you upon an Expectation to hear ſomething from me; and that in Print too: It having been my conſtant former Method to give an account of my ſelf to the World that way. And although I might very well excuſe my ſelf from the ſame thing now, that ſcribling humor being only in the dayes of my Ignorance; when God Almighty pleaſed to permit a Veil to hang between my eyes and his moſt glorious Truth, Namely the veile of my Pride, and Folly: Yet leaſt from a total ſilence, the world which in its own Nature is cenſorious enough, ſhould apprehend, that I either wanted Charity to my late dear Breathren, or Courage to own the Truth, or that I thought the way unjuſtifiable, wherein I now Worſhip and Adore the God of my Fathers, theſe good and Pious men, who until the pretended Reformation of *Luther* and his Followers, knew no other way of Worſhip or Religion, then this, by which Millions of them were ſent into the Boſome of Chriſt. I have at laſt reſolved to give you a ſhort accompt of my ſelf, and what hath befallen me ſince the Happy Reſtauration of our moſt Gracious Soveraign to his Crown and Dignities.

And indeed when I conſider the Love which I have ever had for you, and the returns of Affection, which I have received from many, and moſt of you; I think my ſelf more then ordinarily Engaged, to be free with you in theſe things, as hoping, and in Charity believing, that if I can Convince you of the reaſonableneſs of my Proceedings, you will approve of what I have done; And on the other ſide, if any of you can make it appear, wherein I have done amiſs, you will be ſo juſt (and this Juſtice I here challenge from you) as to ſhew me my Errors.

My carriage whilſt I was in Communion with you, was (I hope) alwaies ſuch, as to give you a ſufficient reaſon to beleive that I neither was, nor am byaſſable by Worldly Intereſts, and

selfish Considerations? When I profest my self against Infant Baptisme, I had run through almost (if not altogether) all the several Professions of Christianity then appearing in this Kingdome, the Catholique only excepted, which as I never had any oppertunity to examine, as not meeting with any of that party who were willing to publish themselves to me for such, so neither did I think them, or their Principles worthy my Consideration, having from the joynt and unanimous consent of all our Pulpits, beleived those of that party to be so grosly ignorant, that to discourse with them in relation to Religion, were but to cast away time and labour.

Being thus prejudiced against the Catholique party, it pleased Almighty God to bring me into the company of a Lay Gentleman of that perswasion, and to give me occasion to spend some considerable time with him: I no sooner understood his Profession as to Religion, but I began to attempt him, in that wherein I thought (as conscious of the weakness of his cause) he would never have engaged; but I soon found my mistake by his readiness to embrace discourses of that nature. And I found also, that we had all embraced a most notorious Error, while we suffered our selves to be perswaded, that the Catholickes were an Ignorant Generation.

The Gentleman seemed desirous to examine every thing from the bottome, and to lay the Ax to the Root, and truly I thought that very reasonable, as conceiving that where the foundation was unsound, the superstructures were not to be relyed on: He enquired of me therefore in the first place, whether I was sure & certain that the Christian Religion in general was more true, then the Religions of the Turks, Jews, or any other, which was opposite thereunto? and whether I was so certainly, and infallibly assured of this; that it was not possible for me, or for those who taught me Christianity, to be mistaken in this? And he gave me this Reason for his Question, namely, that if neither I my self, nor those who taught me that Christianity was the only safe way to Salvation, and the only way in which Heaven was to be attained, was infallibly certain, or were capable of any mistake, or might in any possibility commit an errour in this thing; then as to me, Christianity could be no more, *then probably*

bly true; and we could with no colour of Reason, condemn the Jew, Turk, or Pagan, since they were as well perswaded of their several waies, as we could be of ours, upon a fallible certainty; and for ought we knew (not having any infallible certainty for our Christianity) some of them might be in the Right, and we in the wrong way. And how could you say to a Jew, you must become a Christian, if you expect to be saved, when as if he Examine you strictly and closely in relation to what certainty you have of the truth of Christianity, your Answer will amount to no more then this, *You conceive you are in the Right, and you hope and beleive you are not mistaken: But it is possible you may be mistaken in this; for every man is a Lyar, every man and all men, and every Church is fallible, and subject to Error, and to be mistaken.* Can such Arguments as these invite a Jew or Turk to become a Christian?

I confess I was extreamly troubled with this first difficulty, and knew not how to answer it plainly, and without apparent shuffling, and declining the question, which I plainly did, by urging, that if he intended to call the Religion which Christ Established in the world into question, and to make a doubt of the mayn and Grand Principle of Christianity, which we both of us agreed to be true, I should treat no farther; and that if himself doubted of the Truth of Christs Religion, I was not prepared to Dispute the point.

This Answer seemed very strange even to my self, but it seemed more strange to me, that I should find my self Gravelled in such a question as was fit for every one to answer. However my Opponent used me Gently and Sweetly, and without the least shew of insulting over my weakness, he told me that in reason I ought to answer this difficulty; for (replied he) though it may be true, and is most certainly true, that the Christian Religion, upon the true Grounds upon which it is founded, is infallibly certain and Divine; yet upon the Grounds upon which you may found your beleif thereof, it may possibly not be true or certain as to you: for example, suppose you are told a thing by a known or common perjured person, and upon his word you beleive it, you cannot be certainly assured that the thing is true, becaufe such an Infamous, common notorious Lyer tells you so, but the thing

is really to you doubtful, nay more probably falſe then true, and yet the thing in it ſelf is true: ſo if in the Apoſtles times one had beleived Chriſtianity to be true, not becauſe the Apoſtles taught him ſo, but becauſe *Simon Magus* affirmed it to him, in this caſe who ſees not that ſuch a mans faith had not been true but that the whole thing to him had been uncertain, the belief of it being grounded upon a wrong Foundation, which was no waies certain? From all which it is evident that no Heretick can have true Faith, this I ſhall farther prove, in regard the contrary is an error broached publikely by Mr. *Baxter* in his Treatiſe againſt Mr. *William Iohnſon*, who hath fully ſilenced Mr. *Baxter* beyond all poſſibility of replying with reaſon in relation to this perticular, the proof which I give is in this Argument. Whoſoever hath true Faith, beleiveth the thing beleived, or the material object of Faith for the Divine Authority of God revealing it. But no Heretick beleiveth ſo. Therefore no Heretick hath true Faith. The Major is granted by all, becauſe Chriſtian Faith muſt reſt upon Gods Revelation, as its formal object. The Minor is proved thus, whoſoever beleives the material object of Faith, or the thing beleived, for the Divine Authority of God revealing it, muſt beleive all things which are as ſufficiently propounded to him, to be revealed by God, as are thoſe Articles, which he doth beleive. And muſt beleive nothing as a Revelation of God, which is as ſufficiently declared to him to be erroneous, or not a Revelation, as the Articles of Faith are to be revealed. But every Heretick either refuſeth to beleive ſomething, which is ſo ſufficiently propounded to him to be revealed from God, or beleives ſomething, as a Revelation, which is ſo ſufficiently declared to him to be erroneous, or not revealed from God; Therefore no Heretick hath true Faith. The firſt part of this Major is proved thus: Whoſoever refuſeth to beleive, what is ſo ſufficiently propounded to be revealed by God, either refuſeth all, that is ſo propounded, or beleives ſome things, and refuſeth to beleive others as ſufficiently propounded, as thoſe which he beleives: If he refuſeth all, he can have no true Faith, for he belives nothing, and is therefore no Chriſtian: If he beleives ſome, and refuſeth others equally propounded, then he be-

This is taken out of Mr. *Johnſons* reply to Mr. *Baxter*, called *Novelty Repreſſed*, Fo. 142. 143 &c.

beleives not those things, which he doth beleive for the Divine Authority revealing, (for when two things are equally propounded to the understanding, they ought to worke equally upon it,) but upon his own wilful choice or private judgement refuseth some, and assents to others. As to the second part of the aforesaid Major, *viz.* That no man can have true Christian Faith, who beleives any thing as a Revelation, which is as sufficiently propounded to him to be Erroneous, as the Articles by him beleived, are propounded to be Revelations; the very same Authority which affirms the one, denying the other: Suppose the same Authority acknowledged doth sufficiently propound to a Calvenist the Articles of Faith, as revealed from God, and at the same time assures him, that his conceit of the Popes being the great Antichrist was never revealed from God; but is a manifest error in Faith: In this case our Calvenist must disbeleive that propounding Authority, and thereby lose his Faith in the former Articles by him beleived, and have no true faith in the first; or he must beleive the same Authority in the second because it is the same Authority in both: For that very Authority which propounds the Articles of Faith, as revealed of God, propounds the other as not revealed, and as contrary to Gods Revelation. By all which it is most evident, that if your Faith be built upon a wrong Foundation, it is of no value, nor doth it give you any certainty, nor is it indeed Faith, but Humor and Opinion.

This Discourse seemed to me so convincing, that I could not but agree unto it; and therfore I told him as a full answer to his first question, that I embraced Christianity, and that sort of Christianity to which I adheared in opposition to all others, because the Scriptures which are Gods Word, taught me so to do, and that I beleived the Scriptures to be Gods word from the infallible testimony of Gods spirit, bearing witness with my spirit, that they were Gods Words; and that I was fully convinced, that this proceeded from the infallible testimony of Gods spirit, from a certain knowledge and feeling which I had of the same within my self, and in my own Conscience.

To all which it was mildly replyed, that upon the Grounds which I had laid, and whereon I founded my self, it was impossible for me, to be infallibly assured, that this testimony which I

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mentioned was infallibly the testimony of the spirit of God: For having granted the Protestant Principle, that *it was not infallible*, that *no man or number of men was or were infallible*; this spirit which I talked of, might (for ought I knew) be the spirit of error. And for farther evincing thereof, I was desired to reflect on these Scriptures, Jer. 17. 9. *The heart of Man is deceitful above all things, who can know it?* Eccles. 9. 1. *No man knoweth Love or Hatred by all that is before them.* And to consider the strange delusion, which bewitched the Angel, or Bishop of *Laodicea*, Revel. 3. 17. *Because thou sayest I am Rich and encreased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* How much was he deceived in his own judgement of his own Estate! In fine what would you (said he) answer to an Arrian, or Jew, or Turk, should they urge the like knowledge, and feeling, with the like confidence, to prove they were in the truth, and Christianity a delusion? What you would reply to them, suppose as said unto your self, and see if it will not satisfie.

In the mean time (said he) you seem to imply and so to grant that we ought to have an infallible certainty of what we beleive with Divine Faith; this the Apostles had in the time of our blessed Saviours conversing with them upon earth, they had sufficient to prevail with their wills, to command their understandings into the beleif of his being God consequently infallible, and consequently that whatsoever he taught was to be assented unto as infallibly true, without being questioned by our little feeble limited Reasons. And this was necessary for the Church then, otherwise they could not have been sufficiently assured that what Christ taught them was true, consequently it would not have been a sin in them to have doubted. This infallible assurance also the Christians who lived in the Apostles times, and after the Ascension of our Lord, enjoyed; they had sufficient to endue them to a beleif, that the Holy Apostles were infallible guides and teachers; and that whatsoever they taught and commanded them, was as infallible true, as if God had immediately spoken to them the same things, and no more to be doubted, contradicted, or disputed against by their reasons (which doubtless were as good and strong as ours) then the immediate words, com

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mands, or dictates of Almighty God; otherwise those who refused to hear and obey them had been in no fault, and it would have been an unsufferable Pride and presumption in St. *Paul* to have required such an absolute submission to what he taught, as to oblige the Christians of his time not to have beleived an Angel from Heaven teaching contrary to what he taught them. Hence it is, that the remaining writings (for so much as we have of them) of the Blessed Apostles, are by all Christians esteemed, as the Words of God. And this was necessary in the Age after Christ for the Church of God, namely in the Apostles times, to have a living infallible way of direction, in so much as had we then lived, and had encountred with any doubts or difficulties relating to Religion, and to the true meaning of what was either spoken or written by any Apostle, or by all the Apostles, we should without all doubt have made our immediate recourse to them, some or one of them, for the solving of such doubts, and the explayning of such difficulties; and should have received and submitted unto such solutions as made by God himself, without ever interposing our own reasons or senses in opposition. This we see was the course taken in the fifteenth of the Acts, when certain doubts were arisen amongst Christians, the Apostles met in a Council they considered the things, they determined with an *It seemeth good unto the Holy Ghost and to us.* Their Decrees and Canons were obeyed, and submitted unto by the whole, and the Disputes were at an end. But suppose some dispute had arisen touching the sence and meaning even of some of those Decrees, must not it have been interprited by some judicial Authority? Doubtless yes. And questionless the then Christians would have appealed or applyed to the same Authority that made those Canons and Decrees, for the interpretation of them, and would have submitted to such interpretations; otherwise it would have been with the Primative Christians then, as it is with you now, every one would have framed his own interpretation, those who had been Masters of the greatest Wit, power, or interest, would have framed Parties or Churches to themselves; and in fine the Sword of the Flesh and not the Spirit of God must have given the Rule and Law to Christianity, they would have been so far from any possibility of maintaining *The Unity of the spirit in the bond of*

Peace,

Peace, from being *One body*, that they would have divided into as many parts (to speak without grateing) as you now are, and have gone to Cuffs, and raised Wars for the decideing of Controversies, as we have seen you do since you divided your selves from the Holy Catholick Church of Christ.

It is not hard for you to imagine into what confusion these Discourses put my poor soul, to hear such things, so great evidences of Reason produced by a private Gentleman of that party, whom I had beleived so ignorant. I had oftentimes in Disputations, both publickly and privately encountred, and (I thought) worsted several of the English Clergy in those points wherein I differed from them. But I found nothing now to say against these Principles, which I had yet hitherto supposed the most ridiculous, that any people could imagine to set up. Well I could no longer contest, but resolved to have recourse unto Almighty God by Prayer for his Divine Assistance, and to make it my business according to the utmost of my poor skill and understanding, to take a full view of the Grand Principles of the Catholick Faith, and of Christianity; and laying aside all Prejudices, Pride, and Humour, I resolved by the assistance of God to embrace and submit unto whatsoever I should understand to be most agreeable with his most holy will and pleasure, without taking any regard to worldly interest, or the censures of men, which I had reason to beleive would run high against me. And the better to enable me in this search and examination, I borrowed from this Gentleman several books and treatises, from whence I made several Collections, the Heads of which I recommend to your considerations, they being such, as had (by the Gracious assistance of Almighty God) such a prevailing power upon my understanding, as to convince me of the errors of the way, wherein I then was, and to bring me to the Knowledge of the Divine truths of the Catholick and Christian Faith.

The Books which I here intend are. *The Quelling of Quellers, the before mentioned Novelty repress'd with* Fiat Lux, *and that Elaborate Treatise called* Infidelity Unmasked or a Confutation of a Book Published by Mr. *Will. Chillingworth.*

I gathered from the true interpretation of that Text of Scripture, Heb. 11. 6. *Without Faith it is impossible to please God.* And of that Mar. 16. 16. *He that beleiveth not, shall be damned.* And of that other Ephes. 4. 5. *There is but one Faith, and one Baptisme, one Lord Iesus.* That the faith which was to save me, and by the which I was to please God, must certainly be the *true Faith*, which

which cannot be found in contrary Opinions, it being but *One* and of contraries, One only can be true. I also collected from that Text, 2. Cor. 10. 5. *Bringing into Captivity every thought, to the Obedience of Christ*, That this *Faith* or beleiving was to be seated in the understanding, that the understanding was to submit, not dispute. And that this Act *To beleive*, was a Command or Precept of Almighty God, who will have his Will obeyed by all his Subjects, and the not obeying of which is punished with eternal Damnation. Lastly I found from that Text Heb. 10. 23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised.* That Faith, if truly Divine, must be an infallible assent of our understanding, submitting it self obediently to beleive the Revelations of God. For otherwise Faith and consequently all Religion, may be no more then fancy, or Opinion, and then no waies certain, and if so, then no Obligation.

From whence I thought it did very naturally follow, first that there must be some means appointed by God, by which we may know this one true Faith from all false Opinions for to require us to beleive upon pain of Damnation, and not to give us any means whereby we may know what to beleive, were to require us to make Bricks without Straw. Secondly that these means must be infallible, for we cannot be brought to an infallible ascent by fallible and uncertain means, and God would not require us to assent to an Authority which may deceive us. Thirdly, that the understanding must submit to these means under pain of Damnation; for if the understanding were at liberty to submit, or not to submit, to the means by which Faith is conveyed unto us, it would be no fault not to beleive, consequently God could not justly damne us for not beleiving. Besides, whosoever shall refuse to be governed by their means, and that Authority which God hath appointed to govern him, is a Rebel against God. Fourthly, that two men of two differing Faiths or beliefs cannot be saved; for they both of them, knowing that they are bound to be guided and governed by those means which God hath appointed to convey faith unto them, and one of them flatly refusing to submit, this person who refuseth, must be guilty of disobedience to Gods command, and consequently cannot be saved. Fifthly,

that ignorant people by such reasonable diligence, as is very tollerable to humane frailty, and very possible for them may come to the knowledge of these means. For otherwise God would have appointed means which would be unprofitable to the end, and the far greater number of Souls for whom Christ dyed, would not be sufficiently provided for; by the sweet Providence of God. By which that Prophesy would be ineffectual, Esay. 35. *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not, behold your God will come and save you, then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the deaf unstopped, &c. And one high way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the Holy way, the wayfaring men, though Fooles shall not err therein.*

And thus far I met with nothing but what I esteemed very agreeable with all sorts of people, professing themselves Christians. All that I ever met with seemed to grant that there must be a way, and a Rule; there must be means appointed, there must be a governing power to judge and decide all doubts, and teach us the true way to Heaven with certainty. But *who this Rule or Judge is*, that is the difficulty, for when once we have found it, I think all persons will agree that they are obliged to submit unto it, as to the Apostles if they were actually living, or to Christ himself: This therefore I thought to be the only question that I was to gain satisfaction unto: I therefore ceased to enquire after this doctrine, or the other Article, as beleiving, that if I could once find out this Rule, this Judge which God had appointed as the means to direct me, and to which I was to submit, as to that Authority which God had appointed to Rule and Govern me, to teach me what I was, and what I was not to beleive; I should no more scruple to beleive what that Authority should teach me to be revealed by God, then if I heard God himself speaking: And I was no way discouraged in my resolution to search, when I considered, that as God spoke in Antient times by the mouthes of his Prophets, before and after the Scriptures were written; and by the mouthes of his Apostles before, and after the New Testament was written; and that the writing of what God directed to be written, did not lessen the power of God, but that he might still direct by the mouthes of his Prophets, and Apostles, so possibly I might find God still speaking by an Authority, which hitherto I had not been acquainted with.

I found all the Rules and meanes proposed by every party to amount to four in the whole. One party would set up a claim to the Spirit directing them, and speaking to their spirits. Another will have Reason to be this Rule and Judge. A third will set up sole Scripture. And the fourth assigneth the Holy Catholick Church of Christ Visible here on Earth, to be that Judge and Director. And finally that medium appoynted by God himself for the ends before mentioned, and to which all Christians were to submit. Other then these I never heard of any, for I alwaies esteemed the *Quakers* Light to be either the Spirit or natural Reason, and I resolved to rank it under one of those considerations by a name more known to the world, then that which they have given it. And therefore these I resolved most carefully to examine.

As to the first touching the Spirit, bearing witness in secret with our spirits, or in plainer terms *the Private Spirit*, I considered that there is no man in the world Jew or Turk, Pagan or Christian, but may (if he will put on confidence enough) affirme that he is taught inwardly by God; many of all sorts do this and yet teach contradictions, some therefore must be deceived, therfore this not the Rule. Nor hath this any effect amongst those who pretend it, for by this none of them ever as yet reconciled any differences, but each pretender grows perverse and obstinate, and seperates from all who pretend to have the spirit as well as himself, and so endless Heresies, and Schisms arise without any possibility to allay them, or for either the Learned, or the Ignorant to judge which of these bold pretenders hath a true spirit: In the mean time it will not (possibly) be hard for a sober man to find that they are all of them governed by the Spirit of Error, who pretend thus audaciously, if he considers well the Rule which St. *John* gives for discerning the spirit of truth from the spirit of error. 1 *Ioh.* 4. 6. *v. We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us: Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth from the Spirit of Error.* As if he should have said, Christ hath placed Apostles, and Teachers, and Doctors, to govern and teach his Church, we are those, and therefore of God; therefore whoever pretends to know the Will of God, must hear and obey and submit unto us, or it is evident what he saith, is but a pre-

tence, and he doth not indeed know God, nor is he of God; for if he did know God, or were of God, he would certainly hear us. Here therefore is your Rule to know true from false ſpirits: The ſpirit of truth is alwaies remaining with that Authority which God hath placed in the World, to teach truth to the world, and bring them to the Faith; and all that are actuated and lead by this ſpirit, are taught by it to ſubmit to this Authority, and to hear thoſe whom God hath ſent and doth ſend by this Authority, ſince *Faith* only *comes by hearing* thoſe who are truly ſent; but the ſpirit of error is a ſpirit of Pride, which refuſeth to ſubmit to that Authority which God hath ſet up, and *heaping to themſelves Teachers, having itching eares, turn away their ears from the Truth*, 1 Tim. 4. *v.* 3. 4. By this I ſaw, that although the Rule and the Judge, which I looked for, muſt have the aſſiſtance and influence of the Holy Ghoſt, the Spirit of Truth, yet it could not be every private man or woman who laid claim to ſuch influences, and I who could no more ſatisfie another that they are guided by the Spirit of Truth, then many who are caſt into Bedlam for affirming themſelves to be God, can evince themſelves to be ſo, and whoſe affirmations (for ought I know) are as concluding as the other. In this therefore I was ſatisfied.

The next thing which I conſidered was *Reaſon*, which I found could not poſſibly be this Rule and Judge that I ſought for, becauſe firſt, it was to ſubmit as a Subject and Vaſſall to that Rule and Judge, therefore it could not be it. Secondly, it was fallible, and ſtrangely apt to miſtake, which is againſt the Nature of this Rule and Judge to be; For if God ſhould obliege us upon pain of damnation to ſubmit unto, and to be governed & ruled by an Authority that might deceive us, and might teach us that for a truth which is not, we ſhould be bound to beleive that for true which is not ſo, and yet be damned for not beleiving the truth.

Thirdly if Reaſon were to be this Rule and Judge, then it would follow contrary to the Scripture, that *it is not impoſſible to pleaſe God without Faith*, for Reaſon would teach us ſufficiently how to pleaſe God, yea it would be a breach of this rule to beleive what we do not underſtand, and then every Religion would be the truth, conſequently contradictions would be true, conſequently there would be many Religions, and not only not one

faith

faith but no faith at all; for there is scarce a man living but his reason differs from anothers, understandings and judgements differing as much as Faces, and Reason excludes faith: Therefore no one that followes his own Reason could in justice be condemned by God, consequently all then would be saved, unless peradventure you will say, that in a business of such consequence, as the salvation of our souls, our private Reason perswades us to prefer the Authority of such as are wiser then our selves before our own judgements, which is most true; But then I inferr that Roman Catholicks are the most rational people in the world, and consequently have the best Religion as acting most conformably to Reason; for they rely upon the Authority of General Councels, consisting of the ablest and most Learned men of all Nations, which is the greatest Authority to be found on earth, especially if they have the assistance of the Holy Ghost, as it appears they have both by the testimony of Scripture, and the constant tradition of all Ages. Lastly, that would probably be the truth, and the true faith to one man this year, which seven years hence would be an error, and a false faith, to the same person; for in such a compass of time a mans reason hath such an alteration. Upon these grounds I concluded, that certainly God in his good Providence, had appointed a more sure Guide, Rule, and Judge to bring me to the infallible faith of Christianity, then my own Reason.

The next thing in order to be considered, was the Scriptures, whether these were solely sufficient to teach us the true Faith, and from time to time to direct Rule and Govern us, and to be this Rule and Jude, to whose sentence and determination, to whose directions and Authority all were to submit, and which was to supply unto us the place of Christ and the Apostles. And indeed I found this highly contended for, and several Reasons urged for it.

First the words of our Saviour, Joh. 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.* But to this I found several answers given, which to me were a satisfaction. For first, it doth not appear whether this in the Original be the Imparative or Indicative Mood. St. *Ciril* with whom *Beza* agrees, takes it in the Indicative

Mood

Mood, and then the ſence runs thus; You do ſearch the Scriptures, becauſe in them you have an Opinion that you have Eternal Life; and yet even thoſe Scriptures are ſo far from being againſt me, that they teſtify of me; ſo that I ſhall be no waies prejudiced if I ſhould joyne iſſue with you, and try my cauſe by your own Rule. And in this ſence they are ſo far from proving what they are produced for, that they prove directly the contrary; they are ſo far from being a command to all to read, or ſearch, or make Scripture the ſole Rule and Judge, that they rather ſeem a reprehenſion to all who ſhall frame that conceit of the Scriptures. Secondly theſe words cannot extend to prove this concluſion, if they were in the Imparative Mood (which can never be proved infallibly) becauſe they cannot be profitable to work Faith in thoſe who cannot read, who are the far greater part of mankind. Thirdly, this cannot be the ſence of theſe words, becauſe they would then have excluded Chriſt Jeſus himſelf, and after him his Apoſtles, from being the Infallible means by which true faith was to be taught to the world, and who were doubtleſs in their time the infallible Judges for the deciding of all Controverſies, and the determining true Faith, from falſe Opinions, and to whoſe judgements all upon pain of Damnation were to ſubmit.

The ſecond Reaſon urged for ſole Scripture was, 2 Tim. 3. v. 15. 16. *From a child thou haſt known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wiſe unto ſalvation through Faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus. All Scripture is given by Inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed to all good works.* But I found that neither would this Text (ſo much and indeed ſo totally relyed upon) ſerve as a proof for what it was pretended, namely to prove that the *Scripture alone* was the way, the Rule, the Means, the governing power appointed by God to judge, and to decide all doubts, and to teach us the true Faith, and the true way to Heaven with certainty. The Reaſons why this Text would not prove this were theſe. Firſt, that which is ſpoken there of Scriptures is, that they were able *through* or by *faith in Chriſt Jeſus to make wiſe*, and that they are *profitable* to the ends there mentioned: But this *Profitable* is

not

not sole sufficient, and this *Able* through or by Faith is not solely able, but supposeth Faith already, and therefore pretends not that they are the means preceding faith to beget faith. It was agreed by all that the Scriptures to one that had faith already, and to the Man of God, who would submit to such Interpretations of Scriptures as God should teach him, and hold forth unto him by that Authority which God had appointed to Guide, Rule, Teach and Govern him, and to whom God had appointed him to submit, were extreamly *profitable and able to make him wise unto salvation.* But to one who had not the faith, and who did not already beleive them to be the word of God, they were no way useful or profitable, *for faith comes by hearing*, not by reading. Secondly, those Scriptures here meant, were those which St. *Timothy* had *known from his youth*, which were the *Old Testament only*; consequently by this Rule they are solely sufficient, consequently the New Testament at the best *not necessary*, not the Preaching of Christ, or the Apostles, nor the Sacraments of the New Testament, so that this Scripture either proves too much, if admitted in the sence for which it is produced, or it proves nothing to this purpose. Thirdly, the word *All Scripture* must signifie either *every Scripture* as the Original word πᾶς ought to be rendred; or *All* the Scriptures that ever were, or *All* the Scriptures that were when this Text was written, or *All* the Scriptures that we now have. If it be *every Scripture*, then it proves too much, and consequently nothing to the present intent, for then all the Scriptures save only one book are useless. If it be *All* that ever were, we have them not, as I shall shew hereafter, consequently our rule is maymed, and God hath not given us sufficient means for the ends proposed. If *All* the Scriptures that were when this Text was written, then at least all that have been written since were superfluous, at least not necessary. If *All* that we now only have, and that the Apostle foresaw what would come to our hands in *England*, I would gladly have some assurance why the Text must be thus understood and no otherwise?

In fine if from those words of our dearest Lord, *These things I say that ye might be saved*, Joh. 5. 34. We are not to conclude that those very words or things then spoke, were sole sufficient

for

for Salvation, but only that they were conducing to our salvation; so from neither of the Texts before urged, or any other that can be urged, can we conclude, that the Scriptures are *solely sufficient*, but only that they are conducing to our salvation, and that the directions therein included if followed truly, and according to the intent of the Holy Goſt, are able to make him who is already a good Chriſtian, wiſe unto salvation.

And now that I clearly found that no Arguments which were urged for the ſole ſufficiency of Scripture, and to prove that the Scripture alone is this infallible judge, or rule or means, appointed by God as aforeſaid, did prove the Scriptures to be ſo, or ſatisfie the point for which they were produced. I reſolved to ſee what could be ſaid againſt this common general Opinion of all who oppoſe the Church of *Rome*, why the Scriptures could not be this Rule and Judge.

The firſt reaſon that I found was, that it did never yet appear to anſwer this end; for thoſe who pretend the moſt to conſult the Scriptures, do moſt of all men diſagree in matters of faith, and in interpreting theſe Scriptures. *Luther* the firſt beginner of Proteſtants, gathered a Flock of followers, which divided into ſeveral other ſub-diviſions, contradicting each other. So *Iohn Calvin* rayſed a party in *Geneva* of whom *Luther* ſaith expreſly, Tom. 7. Fo. 380. *I ſcarce ever read of a more deformed Hereſy, which preſently in the beginning, was divided into ſo many heads, ſuch a number of Sects, not one like another, and ſuch variety and diſagreeing of Opinions.* And have we not diviſions enough in this poor Kingdome, and amongſt thoſe who call themſelves Proteſtants? Are there not (beſides the Church of *England* which I pretend not to treat of becauſe eſtabliſhed) Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptiſts, Fifth Monarchy men, Quakers, &c. Maintaining Doctrines contrary to each other? Do not all or moſt of theſe pretend the Scriptures alone to be the Rule and Judge? and doth this Rule or Judge anſwer the end for which they pretend it was delivered to the World? I remember it is excellently well inferred by the Learned Author of the Book Intituled *Fiat Lux*, That it is impoſſible for any one of theſe partyes (which I muſt now crave leave to call Sects) with reaſon to cenſure or condemn any of the others, although never ſo diffe-

rent

rent from themselves even in points by them esteemed fundamentals; since each of them have their uncontroulable Plea for themselves, that their faith is in every respect conformable to what they understand to be the true sence and meaning of the Scriptures, which they all agree to be the sole and only Rule and Judge. Nay which of these Parties can deny the others the Title of Protestant, or convince them of Heresy, since to be a Protestant, no more is required (or if it be I would gladly know what it is) then to admit of the Scriptures interpeted according to their best understandings and Consciences to be the sole and only rule of Faith and judge of controversies? is not he that professeth to follow this principle, allowed by all to be a perfect good Protestant though never so much differing in faith from others who make the same profession? Good God? hast thou told us that Heresies must be, and yet left us without all possibility of convincing or condemning them, or knowing who are, and who are not Hereticks? But those who pretend this Rule and Judge to be Scripture, do in truth as little intend it as any who oppose them: for if they will please but to speak their consciences clearly, it would soon appear that it is not the Holy Scriptures which byass them, but their own private reasons, puting private sences and glosses upon those Scriptures, which were easily quitted if they would once give themselves the liberty to see how easy it is for their reasons to erre in divine things, which are as far above the reach of reason as Heaven is above the Earth, as it is for the same reason to mistake so much in humane affairs as we see it to do.

The second reason was that the Letter of Scriptures was to be construed and applyed by men, wherefore as mens Judgements and interests differ, so will their Expositions of written words; from hence differing sences will be raysed, and from thence different faiths. For Example, If I were to dispute against an Arrian, and to prove that God the Father, and God the Son are of the same substance, I should urge that Text; Joh. 10. 30. *I and my Father are one thing.* And by this, according to my judgement I should think I had proved the question. But then my *Arrian* comparing this with Joh. 17. 22. *Where Christ prayeth to his Father, that his Disciples might all be one thing; as thou*

Father in me and I in thee; concludes that this *One* or *One thing* in both these Texts are to be intended *One* in Affection; not in substance; for, (saith he) it can never be understood that Christ intended to pray that his Disciples might be *One* in substance. If I should urge the *Arrian* farther, and say that the Council of *Nice* gave the same interpretation which I do, to the Text which I urge, he would answer as Protestants generally do, that he hath a Worthy esteem of Councils and Fathers, so far as they agree with Scriptures, but he doth not think them infallible, he believes they may mistake, and therefore where he finds them disagreeing with the Word of God, he must contradict them all.

The third Reason which I thought forcible, was, that those who are thus far from for the *sole Scriptures*, do not say that *One* or any particular number of the Books of Scriptures, but *All the works of Scripture*, which were written by Inspiration of God, do, being joyned together, make up this Rule and Judge to be a compleat Rule and Judge. I concluded therefore, if any of these Books be now lost, this Rule is not perfect; and then Man is left by God without means to beleive, consequently must be damned for that which is not his fault. Now that many of these books are lost, I found clear from those which remain, there is mentioned Num. 21. *v.* 14. *The Book of the Warrs of the Lord.* This is lost. It is said of Solamon, 1 Kings 4. 3. 2. *That he spoke three thousand Proverbs, and his Songs were a thousand and five.* I conceive some of these upon a just reckoning, will be observed to be wanting. We find named 2 Chron. 9. 29. *The book of Nathan the Prophet, the Prophecy of Ahijah, and the Visions of Iddo.* These are lost, as also those named 1 Chro. 29. 29. *The book of Samuel, the book of Nathan, the book of Gad.* It is clear from *Mat.* 27. 9. That part of *Jeremy* is lost, for that Evangelist cites a Text of *Jeremy* not to be found in any of *Jeremies* books which we have. So also are the Books of that Prophet mentioned Matt. 2. 23. who foretold that Christ should be called a *Nazarene.* We shall find by 1 Cor. 5. 9. That the Epistle which our Canon calls St. *Paul's* first Epistle to the Corinthians was not truly his first to them, for there he saith, *I wrote to you in an Epistle not to company with Fornicators*; wherefore if he had then written an Epistle to them, this was not his first to them. St. *Paul* wrote also an Epistle

from

from *Laodicea*, which he mentions thus, Col. 4. 16. *Read the Epistle from Laodice.* It seems there was something in it which was material, yet we do not find that Epistle; the conclusion I think falls out very naturally.

The fourth Reason was this, nothing can be a sole sufficient Rule to all, or the only way and means to convey Divine and infallible Faith to all, or a Judge to whose Sentence all are to submit on pain of Damnation, which cannot be certainly and truly understood by all, But the Scriptures cannot be certainly understood by all. Nay they are very subject to be desperately misunderstood, if you beleive the second Epistle of St. *Peter*, (and beleive it we must for it is Gods word) 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. where speaking of all St. *Pauls* Epistles in general, he saith, *In which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest as they do also the other Scriptures unto their own destruction.* It is in vain to say, that the Scriptures are easy in Fundamentals, and in what concerns our salvation, for we have here a testimony that they are hard and wrested by the unlearned and unstable to their destruction, that is to their Damnation: Now if they were only hard in things not appertaining to Salvation, the wresting of such things could not bring them to Destruction. It followes that they cannot be a safe and infallible secure Rule, nor indeed any Rule at all to the ignorant, who are infinitely the greater part of those for whom Christ dyed.

The fift Reason is this, if the Scriptures that is the writings of the Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles, &c. be this Rule and Judge, it can only be meant of their true, Authentical and Original writings, not of corrupted copies: Therefore if we have not their true Originals our Rule is imperfect; Observe what the most learned Protest. Chamier saith in this particular of Scripture Translations, *We acknowledge them to be made but by a private Spirit, as far as every mans judgement, skilfulness in Languages, dilligence and sincerity were able to reach. Therefore there is none either in our own tongue or in any other, unto which we think meet to subject either our selves or other men. As for Translations the sence of Protestants is this, that all of them, of what standing, name, or credit soever they be, and with what diligence, sincerity or Learning soever they were made, are only so far certain as they agree with*

the first Context, I mean as far as they express that sence which is certainly manifest (and how shall that appear) *to be the sence of the Hebrew and Greek words* (he must intend here the true Originals) *but if they vary and swerve never so little from hence* (i. e. from the true Originals) *that sence which they give or express, we judge neither to be Divine nor Authentick, nor Canonical, but merely humane*, Cham. Panstr. Tom. 1. l. 1. 2. c. 2. §. 3. 5. So then we must have the true Originals, or we have no perfect Rule of the Scriptures, and therefore I would gladly see and speak with that man, who can assure me infallibly, that the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures which we have, are these Originals; Nay who will adventure to make Oath, that these which we have do agree with the true Originals. And yet if we could be secure of this, I doubt it will be hard to finde any person who doth so infallibly understand the Originals, as to give us a true Translation, on which we may with as much infallible assurance rely, as upon God interpreting: And yet if this cannot be had, we must confess that we are not certain whether we have this Rule pure or not. Sure I am the Apostles did not translate these books into English, we are so far from having St. *Matthews* Original, that we know not in what Language it was written, or whether he who translated it into Greek were an honest man or not, we all agree that our English Translatours were fallible men, they might be mistaken, and have mistaken in multitudes of places; themselves say they were carefull to get the best Copies of the Hebrew and Greek they could find, but were not infallibly certain that those they had were true. Have we then in these a sufficent certainty to venture our soules upon, supposing God to have appointed the Scriptures as our sole Rule, Guide and Judge? I think no man who hath any modesty, or any consideration of his Souls good, will say that we have. But sure I am, whoever shall dare to say it, will never be able to prove it infallibly. Give me leave to Expostulate thus with you, who are for sole Scripture. What Scriptures would ye have me to submit unto, who am a meer English man? If you say the Originals, neither you nor I know where to find them: If you say to such Copies as you have, I ask by what Authority do you require this, since they are but Copies of Copies, which you cannot certainly tell me that th

are not corrupted, since the most Learned do affirm that there are variety of these Copies, in some of which whole Verses are omitted which are found in others: and that there are at least sixteen various Greek Copies of the New Testament. If you tell me I must submit to your English Translations, I aske farther, to which of them, for they have differences also, the 9. and 18. verses of the 7th. Chapter of *Daniel*, of the *Geneva* Translation, are directly contrary to the same Verses in the Translation put forth by the command of King *Iames*. Nay the Ministers of the County of *Lincoln* in King *Iames* his time, in their grievances, delivered unto his Majesty Pag. 11. 13. 14. do say that the English Translation of the Bible takes away from the Text, and adds to the Text, to the changing and obscuring the very sence and meaning of the Holy Ghost. Our late great Linguist M. *Broughton* in his Advertisements of Corruptions, affirms to the then Bishops of England, *That their publick Translation of Scripture into English is such, as that it perverts the Text of the Old Testament, in 848 places, and that it causeth million of millions to reject the New Testament, and to run into Eternal Flames.* And Dr. *Daniel Feately* in his Treatise Entituled *The Dippers Dipped*, hath these words pag. 1. *No Translation is simply Authentical, or the undoubted word of God. In the undoubted word of God there can be no error, but in Translations there are and may be errors. The Bible Translated therefore is not the undoubted word of God but so far only as it agreeth with the Original.* (†) I pray consider how you will answer when thus pressed, and how you will be able to satisfie me with certainty, that what you would have me rely upon and submit unto is the undoubted word of God pure and uncorrupted. And by what Rule shall I with certainty satisfie my self what books those are which are the Word of God, for if that be not known, I see not but that it is as possible for me to have other books imposed upon me, then what I have yet heard of or at least seen, as part of this Word of God as well as former Christians, some Ages after the Apostles times had the Epistle to the Hebrews, those of St. *Iames*, St. *Iude*, the latter of St. *Peter*, the second and third of St. *Iohn*, with the Apocalips, or Revelation imposed upon them by Councils, where the Pope was chief? these things are fit to be clearly known, and that with certainty too,

See Jus Divinum upon Presbytery, p. 69. 70,

See *Answorths* Advertisement to the Reader in the end of his Anotations upon *Deute.* touching objections made against the Heb. Text.

(†) As touching the *English* Translations and the Hebrew and Greek Copies which are now extant amongst us

See *John Goodwin* his Treatise upon Divine Authority of Scripture asserted, from Page 4. unto pag. 19 &c.

too before a man submit in so high a measure as you require.

The sixt Reason which I met with was; whatsoever is a sole sufficient Rule must be plain, and clear, in all necessary points (at least) which relates unto Faith, or the means by which Salvation is to be had which the Scripture is not; and above all things it must not contradict it self, which the Scriptures seem to do; to prove these I shall give some few Instances, which I think can never be infringed, that they are not plain and clear as is beforesaid, consider.

1. All Christians generally (except some few) do agree that the Sacraments of the Gospel are necessary in order to salvation; now as to these, the Scriptures are so far from being clean, that they do not so much as determine what a Sacrament is, how many Christ ordained, or whether there be any Sacraments or nor.

2. It is necessary to Salvation to beleive all the Books of the Holy Scriptures to be the word of God, and to beleive nothing written, to be the Word of God, which is Apocryphall. But by the Scriptures it cannot be made out plainly and clearly which Books are the Word of God, and which are Apocriphall.

3. It is necessary to beleive the Scriptures to be the Word of God; but there is no Text or Texts of Scripture to prove that the Scriptures which we have, are Gods word.

4. It is necessary to know that the Scriptures are not corrupted, for if they are corrupted, they cease to be the word of God, and then they cannot be any Rule or sure guide unto us, But of this we can have no assurance in Scripture.

5. It is necessary in order to the knowing the true mind, meaning and will of God, and what he intended by such a Text, that we know when a Text is to be understood liberally, when figuratively, when mistically; but this cannot be understood from sole Scripture, as dayly experience informs us.

6. It is necessary to know, that the very Copies and Translations of the Scriptures which we have, & upon which we ground our selves, are certainly true; for if they are not, we build upon uncertainties; and consequently have no sure foundation for our Faith; yet we cannot be assured, nor have so much as any information as to this perticular from the Scriptures.

7. It is necessary that the many manifest controversies about the true

true sence of Scripture should be decided, because where two contrary sences are imposed, or urged, and both affirmed to be the meaning of God, and his Revelation, one only can be true, and he who refuseth to beleive that which is true, shall be damned; yet these controversies cannot be decyded by Scripture.

8. It is necessary to know what is purely and absolutely necessary to salvation to be beleived, and what not, that is as you say what is fundamental and what not fundamental, and to be informed of this plainly, lest we err and thereby be damned, but in this the Scripture is silent.

9. It is necessary to beleive that *God the Father is not begotten, that God the Son is not made, but begotten, by his Father only; That God the Holy Ghost is neither made nor begotten, but doth proceed, and that from the Father and the Son, That Christ is of one substance with the Father*, and that these *three* are *One*, and that *One, Three*: I refer to consideration whether all these points be plainly and clearely to be found in Scripture, if they were it had been almost impossible, for so many divisions to have hapned about them, as have done amongst persons on all sides, admitting the Scriptures to be the word of God.

10. It is necessary (the Church of *England* saith) that Infants should be Baptised, that women should receive the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, that Christians should observe the Lords day, yet none of these points are clearly or perticularly proved by Scripture.

11. It is a Sin, and (as the Generality of Christians agree) an Heresy to Re-baptise any one who hath been Baptised by an Heretick where doth the Scripture say so?

That there are in the Scriptures several places which seem Contradictions, and consequently some part of the Scriptures seem untrue, is easily proved; and I shall here give you some few plain Instances for example, to which many more might be added.

1. In the 2. *Kings* C. 8. *v.* 26. You read thus. *Two and twenty years old was* Ahazia *when he began to reigne, and he reigned one year in Iernsalem, and his mothers name was* Athaliah *the daughter*

of

of Omri. But in 2 Chron. c. 22. *v.* 2. You will read thus, *Forty and two years old was* Ahazia *when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Ierusalem, his mothers name was* Athaliah *the daughter of* Omri. Now against the infallibility of Scripture, Reason conviuceth her self to have this infallible demonstration, *viz.* No one who speaketh two things, the one contrary to the other, can be said to be infallible in speaking; but to affirm of the same person that *he began to reign when he was two and twenty years old*, and that *he was two and forty years old when he began to reigne*; is to speak two things the one contrary to the other, therefore saith Reason the Scripture is not infallible in speaking.

2. In St. *Matthews* Gospel, Chap. 1. *v.* 17. you read thus, *All the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David till the carrying away into* Babylon *are fourteen generations, and from the carrying away into* Babylon *unto Christ are fourteen generations*; Now if you please to consider that three fourteens must make forty and two, and then please to reckon up all the persons named, you shall find them demonstrably to be but one and forty and no more, which is but two fourteens and one thirteen. Now Reason asketh whether this can be infallibly true.

3. In St. *Lukes* Gospel Ch. 3. *v.* 35. 36. you shall read thus, *Salah, which was the son of Cainan which (Cainan) was the son of Arphaxad*, & if you read *Ge. c.* 11. 12. you shall not find that *Cainan* was the Son of *Arphaxad* as St. *Luke* saith, but that *Arphaxad lived five and thirty years & begat Salah*. Now according to St. *Luke* this *Salah* was the son of *Cainan* not of *Arphaxad*. If it be answered that *Salah* was *Arphaxads* son, because *Arphaxad* was his Grandfather: I pray observe that *Arphaxad* is said to have *begotten* him, and that when he was *five and thirty years old*. And if you remark that Chapter in *Genesis*, no one is said to have had a son before he was thirty years old: But the greatest difficulty will be here, It is said *Arphaxad lived five and thirty years and begat Cainan*. If then *Arphaxad* was Granfather to *Salah*, because he begat *Cainan*, when he was five & thirty years old, (in which year of his age he begat *Salah* then *Salah* his Grandchild, and *Cainan* his son must be both born in the same year, which saith Reason is impossible. Now if Scripture can determine all controversies, I hope

hope you will ſhew me how to ſolve theſe difficulties by the Scripture which how to do I profeſs moſt ſeriouſly I do not underſtand.

The ſeventh Reaſon which I found againſt this Opinion of ſole Scripture was, that if the Scriptures had been appointed by God for this end of being our ſole Rule, Guide and Judge, in all our doubts, and the ſole means to bring faith unto our ſouls, they would have been ſo in the Apoſtles times (at leaſt) after all the books of the New Teſtament were written; but that they were ſo we do not find, for then the Authority of the Apoſtles muſt have ceaſed ſo ſoon as they had made an end of Writing, which I beleive no one will ſay, much leſs prove: And then even in the times of the Apoſtles, if a controverſie had ariſen touching the true ſence of any Text, no addreſs ſhould have been to the Apoſtles to decide the doubt; but to the book which every one muſt have judged, though in oppoſition to the then preſent interpretation of the Apoſtles, if they had then taken upon them to explain their own writings, which to ſay, I think, will appear ſufficiently abſurd to all men. Nay if the Scriptures had been intended for this, it muſt have followed in all probability, that our Lord Chriſt would have left his own law and doctrines in writing under his own hand which he hath not done: at leaſt he would have obleiged all his Apoſtles to write, which he did not that we know of. It ſhould alſo follow, that to write had been the chief part of the Apoſtles Miniſtry, conſequently that moſt part of the Apoſtles neglected to perform the chiefeſt part of their Miniſtry, & were negligent to do that which above all things was their duty, will any of you preſume to affirm this? yet if you ſpeak conſequently, it will be hard to avoid it.

The laſt Reaſon which I ſhall recount unto you is this, that to make the Scripture this ſole Rule and Judge, is in effect not to make the Scripture ſo, but to make every individual man and woman, who take upon them to read and underſtand the Scriptures, ſuch a Rule and Judge unto themſelves; for what difference is there between judging by my own Reaſon, and judging by a Law to be Interpreted by my own Reaſon: This is to make the Scripture not Gods Word, but the word of every private man. Hence I concluded, that if Chriſt be God, as cer-

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tainly and infallibly he is, and if he truly loved those soules for which he dyed, he hath certainly provided for them some more assured means by which to know the true Faith, without which he will not save them, then by leaving them to the Scriptures to be interpreted by each one as he thinks best; for what Law maker was there ever found so ridiculous, as to gather a people into a body, and give them a Law book in writing to govern them, and to be their only judge in all their differences, without appointing, nay expresly prohibeting, that there should be any living judge or Judges, or any Court to expound this Law, and to have the Executive Authority and jurisdiction, from whence there should be no appeal?

Having considered after this manner what could be said, for the private Spirit, Reason, and the sole sufficiency of Scripture, I was in the last place to see what could be said on the behalf of the Catholick Church, resolving from these premises, that if here I could not find a satisfaction in point of certainty, and an infallible assurance, I was not to expect it, (as far as I yet understood) from the Principles of Christianity, and consequently must conclude, that Religion, and Faith, were no more then Fancy and Opinion.

I thought it not unreasonable, and other persons would doubtless have thought the Argument strong enough, if I had sought no further, but concluded, the Private spirit is not, Reason is not, the Scriptures are not this Rule and Judge; therefore the Church is. But I resolved to examine farther, and having agreed the point that such a Rule and Judge there must alwaies be of necessity, and therefore there hath alwaies been, and ever shall be such a One, unless we shall say (which I hope none will) that God is defective in necessaries. I found first, for the first 2000 years, before any Scriptures were written, the Church of God was this Rule and Judge: Was not Circumcision and other Rights brought in by *Abraham*, and practised by the Church then without any Scripture to try them by? what would you have said if you had then lived? would you have disobeyed the then Church, and rejected those Ordinances because there were then no Scriptures to warrant them?

Secondly the Church of the Jews was so to the Jews after that the

the Scripture was written; and this by the expreſs direction of Scripture Deut. 17. 8. *Thou ſhal come to the Prieſts, the Levites, and unto the Judge, that ſhall be in thoſe daies, and enquire, and they ſhall ſhew thee the ſentence of Iudgement, &c. And according to the judgement which they ſhall tell thee, you ſhall do, Thou ſhalt not decline from the ſentence which they ſhall ſhew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left hand; And the man that will do preſumptuouſly, and will not hearken unto the Prieſt or unto the Iudge, even that man ſhall dye.* Therfore our Bleſſed Lord, whilſt the Jewiſh Church was yet in being, gave directions, Mat. 23. 2. 3. *The Scribes and Phariſees ſit in* Moſes *Chair; all therfore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do.* Would God direct them unto, & puniſh with Death for not obeying an Authority, which might deceive them, would our Lord command the doing of whatſoever ſhould be done by an Authority when that Authority was capable of miſtaking?

From hence I concluded, that it was poſſible for the Church of God to be ſuch a Rule and Judge, and to be the means appointed by God, to give infallible inſtructions in the Truth. Now as concerning the Church in the new Law under Chriſt, I found.

Thirdly, that God had promiſed ſuch a Church, ſuch an Authority by the mouthes of his Prophets, Iſa. 2. *v.* 2. 3, &c. *It ſhall come to paſs in the laſt dayes* (ſo the Apoſtles called the time of the New Law). *That the Mountain of the Lords houſe ſhall be Eſtabliſhed in the top of the mountains*, (behold its viſibility) *All Nations ſhall flow unto it*, (ſee its Univerſality and extent) *and ſay come ye and let us goe up to the mountain of the Lord, to the houſe of the God of* Jacob; *And He* (that is God) *will teach us his waies*, (in this his houſe or Church) *for out of Sion ſhall go forth the Law*, (as by the Apoſtles on Whitſunday) *and the Word of God from Ieruſalem* (where the firſt Preaching of the Goſpel begun) *And he ſhall judge amongſt the Nations*; Not perſonally for Chriſt went not of *Iewry*, but) by his Churches Tribunal, erected amongſt all Nations ſo conſpicuouſly, that they may all flow to it. Will any one ſay this judgement, which is Gods judgement, can be fallible? Or that in this Tribunal, he that teacheth can teach us Errors? Iſa. 35. 8. where God promiſeth to eſtabliſh a way of holineſs ſo direct unto us, that *Fooles ſhould not erre therein* Iſa. 54. 3. 13, 17. *Thy ſeed ſhall inherit the Gentiles, thy children ſhall be taught of the Lord, and every tongue that ſhall riſe againſt thee*

in Iudgement, thou ſhalt condemne, Iſa. 56. 21. *As for me, this is my Covenant with them ſaith the Lord my ſpirit* (infallible) *that is upon thee and my words* (infallible alſo) *which I have put in thy mouth* (the mouth by which the Church teacheth and judgeth) *ſhall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy Seeds ſeed, ſaith the Lord from henceforth and for ever.* Behold here the ſpirit of Truth, intailed upon the Church to preſerve it from Error, Iſa. 60. 10. 12 &c. *The ſons of ſtrangers ſhall build up thy walls, their Kings ſhall miniſter unto thee, thy Gates ſhall be open continually, they ſhall not be ſhut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their Kings may be brought, For the Nation and Kingdome which will not ſerve thee,* (by ſubmitting to thy doctrine) *ſhall periſh, I will make the place of my feet glorious, they ſhall call thee the City of the Lord, I will make thee an eternal Excellency, thy ſun ſhall no more go down, nor ſhall thy moon withdraw it ſelf, but the Lord ſhall be unto thee an everlaſting Light.* If thoſe ſhall periſh who refuſe to ſubmit to this Authority, to whom God is an everlaſting Light, and whom he makes an everlaſting Excellency, we need not fear that it can deceive us, or that it can ever ſo be Eclipſed, as to be at any time inviſible. Many more promiſes might be collected out of the Old Teſtament, but I come to ſhew.

Fourthly, that Chriſt by his own mouth, and by the mouthes of his Apoſtles hath promiſed to us likewiſe ſuch a Church, Mat. 16. 19. *Upon this Rock I will build my Church,* (which he had foretold by his Prophets ſhould be of ſo vaſt extent) *And the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it,* Mat. 18. 17. *He that will not hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a Heathen or a Publican,* but if Chriſt by his ſpirit doth not preſerve this Church from all poſſibility of teaching me error inſtead of a truth, I may from this Church which Chriſt obligeth me to hear, and unto which obligeth me to ſubmit, receive ſuch errors as may damn me. Mat. 28, 20. *And Loe I am with you alwaies even unto the end of the World.* this muſt be meant of the viſible Church which was to be in every Age, for the Apoſtles were not to live and to Baptiſe and teach alway unto the end of the world. And therefore if the ſame aſſiſtance and preſence of Chriſt was promiſed to the Church after the Apoſtles, I think we ſhall not doubt but that

that it is the *same* that is infallible. But that it may clearely appear that the Assistance promised by Christ to his Church extended to an infallible security from all errors, consider *John* 14. 16. *I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive*, and v. 26. *The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I shall say unto you*, and ch. 16. 12. *I have many things yet to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now, howbeit when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* But *all Truth* excludeth *all Errors*, and this for ever which was longer then the Apostles were to live: If we therefore enquire, by what means this teaching shall be, by whom the people shall be taught all Truths? and how preserved from all errors? St. *Paul* will tell us, Eph. 4. 11. *He gave some Apostles* (succeeding in full Apostolical Authority) *some Prophets* (expounders of the Prophets) *some Evangelists* (Preachers of the Gospel) *some Pastors and Teachers*, to what end? *For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* For what time? *Till we all come in the Union of the faith.* But will these secure us? the next verse will tell you, *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carryed about with every wind of Doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lye in waite to deceive.* Gods intent then was, to provide such means for mankinde, as might secure them in their beleif in every Age, that they might not be deceived by the cunning craft of false Teachers, such as now think themselves able by pretending inward Lights, Private Spirits, and evidence of Scripture, by themselves Interpreted, to teach us a doctrine contrary to all those, who for almost fifteen Ages before them have been (and none others, teaching a contrary Faith can be named, who have been) the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastours, and Teachers, in the Visible Church of Christ. In the last place I shall urge that Text of St. Paul to *Timothy*, 1 *Tim.* 3. 15. *The Church of the Living God, the Pillar and ground of Truth.* And may we not securely rely upon that Pillar, which God hath erected for us? and found our Faith upon that *Ground of truth*, which the God of all truth hath given us for that end?

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To elude their plain and evident Texts, I know you are wont to say, in the first place, that they may have other Interpretations, and therefore this is not the truth. But will not the same reason hold, the Apostles cited many Texts of Scriptures, and interpreted them so as to prove Christ the Messias, and his Doctrines to be true, whereas those Texts might have had other interpretations; therefore the Interpretation put on them by the Apostles were not true? Who sees not the weakness of this Argument. Can you shew with any assurance, that these Texts are not capable of these interpretations? If not, then according to your own principles these interpretations may be true, for you who say the contrary are not infallible, but may be mistaken.

Another answer which you use to give is, that you are willing to agree, that so long as the Church of Christ teacheth conformable to Scripture, she is infallible, and so long as she doth her Duty she may and ought to be beleived. But this is as weak as the former; for who sees not, that it gives the Church no more priviledge, nor allowes it to have any more benefit from these promises then the Divel hath? for so long as he teacheth conformable to Scripture he may be beleived. A straw may be a Pillar until it bends, and Quick-sands sure ground until they yield. What assurance can we have that the Holy Apostles did their duty in writing what the Holy Ghost did dictate unto them? For if they did not, their writings are not to be beleived; consequently we are not, nor can we be infallibly secure; that the Scriptures which we have were dictated by, and are by Inspiration from God: If you can answer this, so as to be secure that the Apostles did their duty, the same will be our answer, that the present Visible Catholick Church of Christ at all times doth her Duty.

The fift Argument is; that the Church of God was this Rule and Judge, this only means to convey Faith, and this infallible Guide and Authority when our Blessed Saviour was alive, and before the New Testament was written, and also in the Apostles times both before and after the whole New Testament was written. If not I obliege you to shew some evident Text which proves certainly, that after the New Testament was written, the Church in the Apostles time was deprived of this priveledge and Autho-

Authority, and that it had been no sinne, then to oppose, or not submit to the guidance, direction, government, and authority of the Apostles? But if notwithstanding this you shall (without giving any other Reason) insist that the Apostles were this infallible Rule and Judge, in their times only, until the Canon of Scriptures was finished, and then lost their Authority when they had compleated the Canon. I pray consider what will be the consequence in case it stands proved that the Canon of Scripture which they finished, is now uncompleated by the loss of those Epistles and parcels of the Apostles writings which I have proved to be lost? Will it not follow, that for the same Reason that an infallible living rule and Judge was necessary before the Canon was compleat, the same is now necessary some part of the Canon being lost? And what will the consequence be if it stand proved also that supposing the Canon were compleat, yet it is not sufficient to decide the controversies now a foot amonst Christians in matters of Faith? Will it not follow that then it is necessary to have such a Rule and Judge as is before mentioned? The late Learned Dr. *Ferne* a great Champion for sole Scripture, confesseth Sect. 27. That *Indeed such a Iudge or Umpire in Christendome would (if to be had) be aready means to compose all differences and to restore truth and peace.* But shall we think that our blessed Redeemer when he first founded his Holy Church did not see this as clearly as Dr. *Ferne*? certainly he did, and for this reason he appointed the Holy Apostles and their Successors to be this Judge and Umpire, and if you desire or expect to see an end of those differences wherein ye are now involved, by relying on your own private Interpretations of the Scriptures, you must address your selves to this Judge and be content to stand the determination of their Umpire which is infallible; I say infallible, for as the Apostles though as men were subject to error in their own private affairs, and actings, and as such might one withstand the other and reprove the other, yet were they by the assistance of Gods Holy spirit in defining and delivering matters of Faith; so the Prelates of the Holy Catholick Church though as men they were fallible in their own private actings and affairs, yet when assembled in a General Council with their Supream Pastor, they are still made infallible in defining matters of Faith by the assistance of

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the same Holy Ghost, who was as well promysed to them as to the Apostles.

The last reason is, that none of the difficulties that were proposed to prove the Scriptures not to be the Rule, and Judge before mentioned, are capable of being objected against the Church. For first, this Judge and Rule is capable of answering the end for which it is appointed and proposed, all who submit unto the Church agreeing in matters of Faith: Secondly, it is not capable of being misunderstood or misinterpreted by the various Reasons Judgements and Interests of men; but is alwaies in being, and capable upon demand to explain and declare its own sence, and intention upon any difference arising. Thirdly, it is capable of being understood by *All*. Fourthly, it is capable of being certainly known by all. Fifthly, it is capable of determining what plainess and clearness in every Article of Faith, and hath alwaies appeared to do so to the condemation and confusion of all opposers. Sixthly, this was the said Rule and Judge in Christs time, and in the times of the Apostles. Lastly, this doth not set up every individual man and woman to be a Judge and Rule unto themselves, but preserves the unity of the spirit in the Bond of Peace; by teaching all understandings to become Captives to this Rule and Judge appointed by God, for their guidance and direction.

But I know there will be yet an Objection made by you of the seperation, whether these Texts which speak so amply of the Church, are to be understood of the Church Militant and visible in this World? or of the Church Triumphant? For certainly did you apprehend that God had a Church in this world, that is, a visible body politique distinct from that invisible Church which is Christs Mistical body Triumphant, you would not (as I in Charity beleive) divide your selves into so many Congregations, independent of each other or any other body or Government whatsoever in relation to Religion. Now to satisfy you in this I shall desire you to consider, Acts the 20. 28. Where the Text speaks of a Church governed by High Pastors which can only be meant of the Visible Church, and that of *the whole Flock*, or Church *which Christ redeemed with his blood*, which cannot be meant of any perticular Congregational Church 1 Cor. 10. 32.

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Give none offence, neither to the Iews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God even as I pleaſe all men in all things, where he ſpeaks clearly of the ſole and entire viſible Church, 1 Cor. 12. 28. where mention is made of the Governours and Prieſts which are extended throughout the whole viſible Church only. *God hath ſet ſome in the Church, firſt Apoſtles, ſecondly Prophets, &c.* and *Epheſ.* 4. 11. before cited, *Col.* 1. 24. 25. Where Church is taken for the Militant only, for St. *Paul* was not *made a Miniſter* of the Church Triumphant, 1 *Tim.* 2. 15. before cited, muſt ſignifie the ſole and whole viſible Church, for no particular Church can be ſtiled *The pillar and ground of truth*, ſince they may fall, and often have fallen from truth. *Iam.* 5. 14. Where he ſpeaks in general to all beleiving Chriſtians, and of a Church uſing viſible Ceremonies, and Prieſts or Elders, which is not the Church Triumphant, *Mat.* 16. 18. where the Church of Chriſt is to be built upon *Peter*, and therefore muſt be meant of the viſible Church Militant; for it is built, whilſt Militant and transferred when it is Triumphant. Nor can this be any other then a viſible Church founded upon a viſible Rock or Foundation: for that Rock there ſpoken of is not Chriſt, but St. *Peter*, as the words clearly ſignifie, for our Saviour ſaies, upon *this Rock* I will build my Church, immediatly after he had named St. *Peter*, where as if he had meant himſelf, or St *Peters* confeſſion of his being the Son of the ever living God, this being the remote or mediate antecedent, he ſhould have ſaid according to Grammer and true conſtruction *and upon that Rock*. Beſides he ſaies, *I will build my Church*, whereas if by *Rock* he had intended himſelf, or St. *Peters* aforeſaid confeſſion, he would have ſaid, *upon this Rock I have built* or *I do build my Church*, not *I will build*: For when our Lord ſpoke theſe words, his Church was then actually built upon him, and upon his being the Son of the Living God. He ſpoke then therefore of what he intended to do and of what was to be after his Reſurrection and Aſcenſion into Heaven, and promiſeth here that for thoſe future times his viſible Church ſhould be built upon St. *Peter*. Laſtly, that I may ſpeak not as to the word only, but alſo as to the thing it ſelf, *viz.* The Divine conſtitution of the Catholick viſible Church, by the Ordinance of our deareſt Saviour. Conſider, 1 *Cor.* 12. where it is

at large described by the Holy Apostle to be *One body* with different parts fitly disposed, ordered and connected together in one and the same body. Whereof *One*, he saith is the Head, and that must be as visible as the rest of the body, (for a visible body without a visible head would be a Monster) and such a visible Head as stands in need of the foot, which Christ cannot do being God, and so wanting nothing. And this the Apostle applies to the Apostolical Church in his time, and the same is also described again. *Ephes.* 4. from v. 4. to the 17. But I suppose you will be asking? Is not then Christ the Head of his Church, can the Church have another Head besides Christ? I answer Christ is the Head of his Church, and yet the Church of Christ by his appointment may have in its external Government another Head, that is an external Head, by the appointment of Christ. I say Christ is the only absolute independent Head, but he may appoint a dependent Head derived from him. Christ is the sole Head that Governs all both Pastors and People, and the cheif Pastor also. Thus God is the King of the World; may not he therefore have other Kings Reigning under him? Now how opposite and contrary your Congregational Churches, and all Churches divided from the true Visible Church are to this constitution, is easy for you to see. What are those Congregational Churches but a confused Rabble of Itching Ears, heaping up Teachers to themselves, without any either single Person, or Assembly of them endowed with power to govern or direct all of their Congregations dispersed in divers Provinces and Countries, but every one stands upon its own bottome, and hath no dependance of the rest, as do the Common-Wealths of *Venice*, *Geneva*, *Holland*, *&c.* so that they have no visible unity amongst them, either of coordination or subordination, but are politick bodies, wholly seperate and disjoyned the one from the other. Can you think this the constitution of Christs visible Church on earth? Is this One Body? Is this a compaction and conjunction by joynts and Nerves, mentioned by the Apostles? The first and Original Christian Church in our Saviour time was such an united body, as St. *Paul* mentions, having then our Saviour for its visible Head, and his Disciples for its Members, all united together in one visible Communion; and was not this Original Church

Church the Model and Platform laid by our Saviour to be imitated and followed in its manner of Government by all succeeding Ages? The Apostolical Church next to that of our Saviours time, was like unto it, where St. *Peter* was the chief Pastor, and the Apostles under him, over the whole Church dispersed both amongst Jews and Gentiles, as appears *Acts* 15. and who had power to change this Original and Apostolical manner of union and Government in after Ages into a quite opposite digestion, and to bring in a perfect Anarchie?

I hope from the grounds here laid, it will appear as clear to you as I profess it did to me, that the visible Church of God on Earth which in the Creed is called the Holy Catholick Church, was and is that Rule and Judge, that means appointed by God, for the conveying of the Christian Faith to the World, and to whom all on pain of Damnation, were and are by Gods Ordinance to submit, as to the Authority appointed by God to teach them what they ought to beleive in order to the attaining of Salvation, and that without disputing any more then they would have disputed the decrees and directions of the Holy Apostles, were they now living upon Earth, consequently that this Authority was infallible.

It will onely remain that we consider which amongst all those congregations now on Earth, which pretend themselves to be this Church of Christ is really and truly this Holy Church and Spouse of Christ. For having once found her, and knowing that she is so assisted by the Holy Ghost, that she cannot teach us an Error. instead of a Truth, we shall no more dispute the verity of her Doctrines, then we should have questioned the Articles of Faith taught by the Holy Apostles, or the words of Christ himself? Wherefore if this Church this infallible Guide shall teach us, that Infants are to be Baptised, that it is as lawful to desire the Saints departed to pray for us, as to desire the Prayers of those who are living on our behalfs, That the body of Christ our Saviour is really and truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar (or the Lords Supper) or any the like Article of Faith, we shall no more doubt of it then, the first Christians did dispute the verity of what the Apostles taught them; when they informed them

that they were to beleive that Christ whom they had seen as man was true and very God, that a Virgin still remaining a Virgin, might by the power of the Holy Ghost bring forth a child. That the body of Christ spiritualized might pass through a Dore, the Dore being shut: That three could be One, and One three. For who shall dare to question what God shall tell him to be true. And if God now speaks by the mouth of his present Church as he did by the mouth of his Church in the times of the Apostles, who shall doubt the truth of those words, which proceeded from his mouth?

Wherefore as to this last question, which is now this present Church of Christ, which is our infallible Guide and Judge appointed by God for our direction, and to whom we are to submit, as aforesaid. I shall in brief give you that answer, which I professs gave me a full and clear satisfaction; and it is shortly this. The Protestant Church of *England* and all other Churches different from the Roman, do judge and declare and profess themselves to be fallible, even according to the infallible word of God. If then the said Protestant Church of *England* or any other Churches different from the Roman be infallible in all that they judge, and in that they declare and profess to be true according to the word of God; they doubtless are then infallible, and speak then the infallible truth, when they judge, declare and profess that even according to the Word of God, they are fallible. Therefore infallibly they are fallible. Hence again it being thus proved that no Church different from that Roman is infallible: And it being before proved that God hath appointed some Church upon earth to be our infallible Jude, it demonstratively followeth that the Roman Church must needs be this infallible Judge, because no church different from it (that is none but the Roman Church) can be this infallible Church. But I pray you do not mistake this Argument, as some have pleased to do, who think the force of it to lye thus, *viz.* The Roman Church claimeth infallibility, therefore she is infallible. This is nothing like the Argument which I put, the force of which lies thus. That the Church truly appointed by God for this infallible Judge of controversies cannot possibly be any of those Churches, which teach themselves not to be this infallible Judge, because they teach themselves to be Fallible: if then they be infallible in the

doctrine

doctrine they teach, they are infallible when they teach themselves to be fallible. Therefore infallibly they are fallible. Now the Church which is truly appointed by God to be this infallible Judge, must needs have this condition that she doth own her infallibility; but this is far from saying that meerly her owning of infallibility doth make infallibility her own. It is a very different thing to say. *He that must be a Minister must needs be a man and not a woman*, and to say *That such a one must needs be a minister because he is a man and not a woman.* So it is one thing to say, the Church which is the infallible Judge must be a Church judging and holding, and professing her self to be infallible; and cannot be a Church, which judgeth and professeth her self to be fallible. And another quite different thing to say, that such a Church is the infallible Judge because she teacheth and professeth her self to be so.

Nor be not (I pray) so far mistaken, as some are usually, and wilfully, if not maliciously, to think that when I speak of the Roman Church, I intend the Church of the Dioceſs of Rome, and so pretend to make a particular Church to be an Universal, and the Universal or Catholick Church of Christ. No, I intend by the Roman Church, all that vastly extended community of christians, which liveth in communion with, and in subjection and Obedience unto the Bishop of Rome, as to their Supream Pastour and Governour on Earth in things appertaining unto faith next under Christ. This is the Flock of Christ adhering to the true Shepheard appointed them by God.

And now (dearest Friends) I have no more to say, but only entreat you in the bowels of Charity to learn by heart that most pretious lesson of our sweet Saviour, viz. *Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart.* And that you may be in a ready way to learn this, remember (in order to it) that Lesson (which I mentioned before) of his beloved Apostle St. John. 4. 6. *We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth us not, hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.* There was nothing then required to distinguish these two spirits, but to hear, or to refuse to hear the Apostles, and seeing St. *Paul* saith, *Faith comes by hearing*; It will be as necessary now to hear in our times, those who are lawfully sent to teach it,

it, as it was in the times of the Apoſtles. If therefore ye hear no body, or follow thoſe who at firſt, and in their beginning heard no body, you refuſe to hear thoſe who are ſent to teach you And then according to St. *Iohn*, it is evident you are lead by the ſpirit of error. Conſider theſe things and be happy, according to the Prayers of,

Your true Friend and well-wiſher

in the beſt things

ROBERT EVERARD.

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POSTSCRIPT.

I apprehend that it is not impossible but that some of you will be attempting to answer this Letter, and endeavouring to shake these Principles, which have by Gods Grace proved of strength to win me to the Holy Catholick Faith. To such I shall only give these cautions. First that they will be pleased in their Answer, to set down my own words as they lye intirely and without maiming them: If they shall please to answer by Paragraphs, and to set down each of my Paragraphs wholly and sincerely before their Answer to the same Paragraph, I shall own their Candor and Justice; But if they Answer by setting up a Puppit of their own, pretended to be mine, they will not make mine, but their own Arguments ridiculous; and will not deserve a Reply from me, or to be regarded by any one. Secondly, that they will forbear all Reproaches and Slanders against the Catholick Church, or Catholicks in general or in particular, this is a fault to which Protestants are too much addicted in general; but most particularly those of the Presbiterian and Independent perswasions, they have alwaies used to deal with Catholicks; as they did with His late Majesty of glorious memory, and with our most dread Soveraign that now is, and their party, viz. to impute crimes to them without end, and errors innumerable; without taking care to examine whether what they charged them with was true or false: So if they can throw Dirt enough upon the Catholicks, and impute Opinions unto them sufficiently monstrous, all is well, they know the major part of the Nation to be byassed with interest, and ready enough to beleive what ever is suggested against those whom they call the Common Enemy, *and that thousands will admit a thing for truth if they find it in Print, rather then take the pains to examine whether it be true or not, and therefore have no difficulty to cast forth untruths, with as much confidence as if themselves were satisfied, that all they publish is dictated by the Holy Ghost: As for those who are and shall be guilty of these crimes, I only wish them the like Repentance which St.* Augustine *had for the like errors committed by himself whilst he was a* Manichæan, *of which he makes this mention, St.* Aug. *the 6. book of his Confes. c. 3. towards the end.* I blush even full of Joy in regard that I found my self thereby not to have barked against the

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Catholick Faith, but against the Fancies and Fictions of carnal thoughts. But yet I have been rash and impious in that I had said those things accusingly which I ought to have learnt inquiringly. *Nor do not (I beseech you) take a liberty to upbraid me as if I had some private ends in my present Change; but be pleased to consider, that I am now united to a Communion whose portion in this Kingdome is to suffer, to be poor and scorned, to want preferments and suffer affronts from every hand who shall please to give them. Whilst I was at the head of a Troop of Horse in the Rebellious Army (a sin which I hope my dearest Saviour hath forgiven me, I having heartily asked pardon of my God as I here do of my Soveraign for the same) I was in a condition to rise, and thrive, and glut my sences with what this world called good and pleasing; But I thank my Saviour I am now brought home to that Church of His, which teacheth me to suffer and be humble, to give Obedience to Authorities for Conscience sake, to become a servant and a learner, not a master or a Teacher, to hear those that are lawfully sent to take care of my Soul, and not to usurpe the Office of the Priests, or proudly to intrude my self into that Sacred Function. I must for ever hereafter cease to be contentious, and let my Prince or those who are in Authority under him determine what they please in relation to my body or Estate, I hope I shall at all times hereafter follow the blessed Precepts of God, which I receive from the mouth of his Church, and from the Holy Scriptures, namely* To make Supplications, and Prayers, and Intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, for Kings and all that are in Authority, that I may lead a quiet life in all godlinesse and honesty, 1 Tim. 2. v. 1. 2. And to those who shall be otherwise minded I shall only say, *We have no such custome amongst us in the Church of God.*

FINIS.